

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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NOTES

ON CONFERENCE

REVIEWED BY V WOLF JR
JORDAN 8/25/82
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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
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SUBJECT: JORDAN

PLACE : American Embassy, Amman

PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS: United States

Mr. John Foster Dulles
Mr. Harold E. Stassen

Jordan

Delegation of Refugee
Leaders

Prior to beginning of conference photographs were taken of the Secretary and the American Ambassador.

Refugee Leaders were then introduced to the Secretary by Mr. Vernon Cassin.

Introduction by Mr. Dulles:

"I am very happy to have this opportunity to meet briefly with you gentlemen. The plight of the refugees whom you represent is certainly one of the most tragic problems there is in the world today. The task of finding a solution is a task which should challenge the united intelligence and wisdom and statesmanship of the peoples of the world. I do not come here with any solution of this problem, or of any problem for that matter. I come here as I have repeatedly said to evidence the increasing Christian concern which....."

Interrupted by arrival of Mr. Stassen
introduced by Mr. Cassin.....

"I repeat that we come here not with a solution of the problem but to show evidence by our presence here of the increased concern which our Government shares in this area of the world and as evidence of the increased determination that our Government has to be helpful in any way that is welcome in attempting to exchange courtesies and develop better spirit of cooperation and goodwill. We are here to listen and to learn, and of the things we want to learn none are more important than the problems of those who represent the tragic element of humanity now known as the Arab refugees. We shall be very pleased to hear whatever you representatives have to say on their behalf."

First representative, Dr. Izzat Tannous:

"Mr. Secretary, we wish to thank you on the behalf of the refugees for coming here and we wish to welcome you to this country. It is indeed heartening to the refugees to see that the Secretary of State of the United States of America should come to this country to see with his own eyes what has taken place in this country and to see the drastic difficulties and plight of the refugees..."

Interruption by the Secretary:

"We were able to see as we drove past the refugee camps some of the refugees and the conditions they live in..."

Dr. Tannous

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Dr. Tannous continues:

"As I say, we have often asked in the United Nations for members to come and see, because when they see things too, they will appreciate the harm that has been done. It just happens that today is the 15th of May --- and the 15th of May is the day of our crisis. I do not know whether destiny has made it so that we should meet you on that day. It may be that this very day will open a new era for the improvement and the return of the properties to those refugees and to the people of Palestine who have been deprived of their homes and lands. In the past we considered the date as symbolic of our suffering, and we hope that in the future we shall commemorate it as a day of festivity instead of as a day of mourning. Your Government, as you have said, is now taking more interest in solving this problem. You must have passed the refugees, and noted the conditions in which they are living. You also passed through Israel and you have seen the property and lands in Israel. These lands belong to those people you passed and whom you will be passing as you go along. These people were living happily in their homes, farms and villages. They were well established and happy. Now they are destitute. I hope you have also seen those on the border. They are just on the borderland between the two boundaries. Although they have lost their lands, their houses and huts remain on this side. They are landless and have no means of livelihood. Although they still have their homes, tens of thousands of these people have lost their lands which have been tilled for thousands of years by their families and they are not, therefore, considered as refugees according to the United Nations. The definition of a refugee, according to the United Nations, is a man who has lost his home. Because of this situation the border villagers receive no help and are leading a very bad life.

"These conditions will force the refugees to go contrary to the teachings of democracy. We want to warn you, that although we don't want war, we cannot overlook the fact that you have created a class of people who are so destitute that they are bound to want war. This only emphasizes the necessity of a quick solution. We have to have a solution now, because the problem grows and becomes more bitter. These people are losing hope and unless we do something to assist them and give them hope regarding their determination in the United States, it might be too late to overcome it in the future. This is not the place to go into past history to prove our rights, the rights of these refugees. But things are as they are, and we do have refugees. These people of Palestine have been displaced and none have been replaced. They are replaced by other people. Something must be done. Now we endeavor to arrange for them to return in order that they might assume their normal life. There were resolutions made by the United Nations. The whole situation is the result of the partition and other United Nations resolutions. The 1947 resolution of the partition has divided the country into two and created the refugee problem. Our contention is that no proposed economic solution will settle the matter. It cannot. It requires a political solution. These people, according to the principles of the United Nations resolutions are refugees. We were driven from our lands. The whole country was our land. The refugees must go back to their part of the country, where they have tilled the land for thousands

of years

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of years. Two hundred thousand would go back to the land if the United Nations resolutions are implemented. With the financial help of the United Nations these people can go back to live their just lives. It will relieve the refugee question. It will relieve the serious refugee problem and will lead to prosperity. Two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand, probably more, will return to that country and will lead a normal life. I think it is right for every refugee to go back to his country. It is our indisputable right. It is found in the Declaration of Our Rights in two United Nations resolutions. These United Nations resolutions were taken at different times for these refugees to go back home -- to go back home to their country...."

Mr. Cassin next introduced the second representative, Abdul Rahman Siksek. Mr. Siksek read the following memo:

"The Democracies have been treating the refugee problem during the last five years as if it were an economic problem which could be solved by rehabilitation of the refugees in the Arab countries, and the payment of monies, whether as grants or otherwise, to Arab Governments. The result of these attempts was a total failure. The refugee problem in its essence and as the refugees themselves see it, is a political problem much more so than an economic or humanitarian one.

"In handling this case a very important psychological element, which cannot be uprooted from the hearts and souls of the refugees, has been neglected, namely, love of their country and their obstinate refusal to exchange it for any other.

"The Democracies in adopting this wrong course in the treatment of this case thought that time will have its effect on the refugees in reducing their love to their countries and in accepting to be settled in the other Arab countries. It is high time for the Democracies in general and the United States of America in particular, being responsible for directing the policy of the Democracies at present, to realize that the unshakable determination of the refugees is to refuse any such solution and to insist on their natural and inalienable right of return to their homes and the homes of their fathers and forefathers.

"It is necessary that it should be made clear that any amount of money, no matter how large, which would be spent along that wrong line of treatment, would not lead to the solution of the problem, nor would it stem the tide of communism which is about to sweep the Near East.

"The national spirit and feelings among the Arab peoples after the calamity of Palestine, have reached a degree which ought to make the Democracies realize that their interests cannot be secured in the Arab world by a friendly Government if the people themselves are hostile. The Arab peoples will remain hostile to the Democracies until and unless the Palestine problem has been justly settled in accordance with the demands mentioned in the memorandum which I now submit."

Mr. Cassin introduced the third representative, Mr. Kamal Araquat:

"I read

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"I read a brief message from the Jericho District refugees and say that eighty thousand refugees were waiting for you to come by and see you but they would not let us see you. This message is brief. The first thing we want is justice. We want these people to go back to their homes. We want the orders of the United Nations to be executed according to the following provisions: (1) No settlement will be made in the Middle East without repatriation of refugees. (2) Palestine Arabs aspire for justice from Mr. Eisenhower and you, Mr. Dulles. We were not conquered by war, we were deprived of our rights and we are asking for justice, and justice is all we ask for."

Mr. Cassin thanked the Delegation. After formalities the Delegation dispersed.

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